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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 001543

SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR FOLEY

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TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ASEC, HA, Security Situation
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S CHIEF OF STAFF PAINTS GRIM SECURITY
PICTURE

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1497

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Foley for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (S) SUMMARY: Presidential Chief of Staff Michel Brunache describes the May 31 attack on a Port-au-Prince marketplace by pro-Aristide chimeres as a devastating blow to the IGOH, one that has exposed the government's impotence to the population. He discussed the need for a shakeup in the HNP hierarchy, notably by empowering the office of the State Secretary for Security. Prime Minister Latortue will travel

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to New York next week to press the Secretary-General and the Security Council to order MINUSTAH to stem the mounting violence. However, both Brunache and Latortue said they have no faith in the United Nations and appealed for the deployment of U.S. military forces. Brunache painted a grim picture of where the violence is heading. He described a society consumed with fear and hatred, in which all sectors are arming themselves in anticipation of what he predicted would be a "civil war." END SUMMARY

2. (S) I met at his request yesterday with a demoralized Michel Brunache, chief of staff of interim President Alexandre. Brunache came to the residence to discuss the deteriorating security situation. He described Tuesday's attack and torching of the Tete Boeuf marketplace -- which cost about 4,000 people their livelihoods, and a still rising death toll -- as a devastating blow to the IGOH, which has

been revealed to the population as utterly incapable of protecting them. Brunache was highly critical of the HNP and MINUSTAH, both of which arrived on the scene well after the carnage. Making matters worse, he said that the top MINUSTAH generals, Heleno and Lougani, had minimized the importance of the attack in the CSPN meeting held later that afternoon.

3. (S) Brunache mostly wanted to discuss the state of affairs within the police. He said the HNP had been warned several days in advance that an attack on the marketplace was imminent. Brunache had listened on the police radio net as officers described the steady advance of at least 100 chimeres, many of whom had crossed the city from as far away as Cite Soleil. He said that HNP Director General Charles, whom he described as perhaps the only senior IGOH official he trusted, was clearly in over his head. He had never succeeded in establishing his leadership within the HNP, and was weakened by the constant rumors that he would be replaced and by the ambitions of other senior HNP officers to replace him.

4. (S) Ideally, Brunache said Charles ought indeed to be replaced, but he agreed with me that it was difficult to identify an alternative that would not prove worse, especially from the point of view of integrity. He believed the best solution would be to surround Charles with a high command of competent (and loyal) officers, but there, too, the pickings were slim. The other action that needed to be taken was to have a State Secretary for Public Security who could provide Charles and the HNP with the guidance and strategic direction that were so sorely lacking. Brunache believed that the incumbent, David Basile, could probably do the job well if he were given sufficient authority. I noted that Basile, an ex-FAHD colonel, had initially rubbed the international community the wrong way since it appeared that his plan was to militarize the police. Brunache admitted that he had shared those concerns, but now felt they were no longer an issue inasmuch as the ex-FAHD appeared to be a spent force. He felt Basile had the experience, intelligence and integrity needed to properly organize the HNP.

5. (S) Basile had two problems, noted Brunache: Justice Minister Gousse, his immediate boss, and Prime Minister Latortue. Gousse had wanted to handle the police himself and thus had shunted Basile aside and deprived him of any authority over the police. The Prime Minister, meanwhile, was unwilling to overrule Gousse because his security chief (and nephew), Youri Latortue, perceived that his own ties into the police would be undermined if Basile was empowered to do his job.

6. (S) We discussed the Gousse problem at some length. Brunache said that the President had been persuaded that Gousse should go, but the Prime Minister was balking. Even though everyone, including his backers in the private sector, agreed that Gousse had been a complete failure both on the security and justice fronts, the Prime Minister was concerned that sacking him would create a nationalist backlash, given

the well-known position of the international community. Brunache acknowledged that this was illogical and self-defeating, but described this as an authentic though regrettable Haitian tendency nonetheless. However, Brunache felt that if Gousse stayed on it would be possible to wrest control of the police from him. Persuading the Prime Minister was the harder task. We ended up agreeing that I would discuss the issue with the Prime Minister and press him either to empower Basile or replace him with someone who would have the authority to do the job.

7. (S) We also discussed the state of affairs within the IGOH. Brunache stressed that he and the President were strongly committed to keeping Latortue because of the risk that his replacement under current circumstances could only further destabilize the situation and endanger the elections. That said, Brunache commented that the government was certain to fall if there was another catastrophe along the lines of what had happened this week.

8. (S) I asked Brunache where he saw the security situation heading. His answer was a virtual echo of the alarmist views of Minister for Haitians abroad Baptiste (reftel). He said the pro-Aristide forces believed that if a handful of ex-soldiers could topple the government last year, they ought to be able to do so themselves. He claimed that arms were coming into the country and that Aristide's partisans had established training camps throughout the provinces (he mentioned Grand Goave and Petit Goave, as well as places in the north). He predicted that their attacks would increase in intensity to the same degree that progress was achieved towards holding the elections.

9. (S) What worried Brunache the most was the state of opinion within Haitian society. He described a population seething with hatred, and living in fear of more violence to come. "Everyone" was procuring weapons, he claimed, in order to protect themselves against anticipated developments. He believed the private sector notably was not going to sit back and wait for further attacks; they were busy creating private militias with which to fight the gangs. Brunache claimed that the country was on the verge of a "civil war" (his words). The chimere violence and kidnappings were becoming increasingly brutal, even bestial, underscoring the mounting levels of class hatred.

10. (S) Brunache pleaded for U.S. assistance. He first mentioned the need for air support and intelligence help from the United States. He later came around to the question of U.S. troops. He said he understood the U.S. was heavily committed elsewhere in the world, and that the feeling in Washington must be "let them handle it themselves" ("qu'ils se débrouillent"). He also volunteered that there must be an understandable reluctance to bail out a government that basically has nothing to show for its time in office. Still, he said he could not see how the IGOH and MINUSTAH would be able on their own to halt the downward spiral. I promised to

convey his views and assured him that Washington was indeed aware of the deteriorating situation and what was at stake for Haiti and for us. He left the residence almost mute and visibly shaken.

11. (S) Later I called the Prime Minister on a separate matter. Towards the end of our conversation he said he had had a lengthy discussion earlier in the day with SRS Valdes, who is on vacation in Rome. Latortue reported that at Valdes's suggestion he would be traveling on Monday to New York to meet with Kofi Annan to explain the dire situation and the need for MINUSTAH action. Nonetheless he renewed his plea for the deployment of a limited number (200, he said) of U.S. troops. He said he had been meeting with every sector of society, and that all of them had the same refrain -- only the U.S. can prevent a disaster here. I gave Latortue the same response I gave Brunache, and then asked him whether he thought Valdes grasped the gravity of the situation. The Prime Minister thought and then said no -- Valdes was in Rome, wasn't he?

12. (S) Latortue also told me he would attempt to untangle the mess in New York with the Chinese. He regretted that Brunache had gone on the radio yesterday to confirm President Alexandre's resolve to travel this summer to Taiwan. Latortue implied that he was considering putting the President's trip in play. I said if he did so he should insist on the 12-month renewal. Latortue said he would not only do that but also insist on the raising of the troop and police ceiling. I wholeheartedly agreed.

FOLEY

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